

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 /087 W

----- 105889

R 221855Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4353

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

USCINCUSNAVEUR

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 0499

DEPARTMENT PASS DOD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SSP, SP, MO, AL

SUBJECT: SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH SPAIN WITHDREW ITS LAST MILITARY UNITS FROM SAHARA JAN 13, SPANISH STILL HAVE OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN TRIPARTITE ADMINISTRATION UNTIL FEB 28. ACCORDING TO MFA, TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN DISADVANTAGEOUS TO ALL SIDES AND PROBLEM IS FAR FROM RESOLVED INASMUCH AS EQUILIBRIUM IN MAGHREB HAS BEEN COMPROMISED. SPANISH MILITARY SHOWS SOME SIGNS OF LATENT RESENTMENT AT MANNER OF SPANISH DEPARTURE. GOS AND GOM ARE REPORTEDLY NEAR AGREEMENT ON FUTURE OF PHOSPHATE MINE BUT HAVE YET TO WORK OUT TROUBLESOME ISSUE OF FISHING RIGHTS IN SAHARAN WATERS. SPANISH MEDIA NOTE THAT ISTIQLAL HAS REITERATED CLAIM TO SPANISH PRESIDIOS ALONG WITH TINDOUF (ALGERIA).
END SUMMARY.

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1. CONTINUING SPANISH PRESENCE IN SAHARA: ACTING SPANISH GOVERNOR GENERAL IN TRIPARTITE ADMINISTRATION IN SAHARA, COL DE VIGURI, TOLD SPANISH PRESS THAT SPANISH FLAG WILL BE FINALLY HAULED DOWN FEB 28 WHEN GOS MISSION UNDER TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT ENDS. ALTHOUGH LAST SPANISH MILITARY UNITS LEFT SAHARA JAN 13, 177 SPANISH CIVIL DERVANTS REMAIN IN EL AAIUN AND 106 IN DAKHLA (VILLA CISNEROS), NOT COUNTING THE ESTIMATED 800 SPANISH WORKERS ON THE FOS BU CRAA PAYROLL.

2. MAGHREB EQUILIBRIUM UPSET BY TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, DIRGEN FOR NORTH AFRICAN AND NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS FERRER TOLD DCM JAN 20 THAT IN HIS PERSONAL VIEW, TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT WAS DISADVANTAGEOUS TO ALL SIDES AND THAT EACH HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR MESSY DENOUEMENT WHICH HAS UPSET PRE-EXISTING EQUILIBRIUM IN MAGHREB. DIRGEN BELIEVES THERE WILL BE MORE TROUBLE IN THE AREA BEFORE IT SETTLES DOWN. (FERRER IS ABOUT TO LEAVE HIS PRESENT POSITION, PERHAPS IN PART BECAUSE OF HIS OPPOSITION TO THE SAHARA POLICY). WE NOTE THAT LT. GEN. GOMEZ SALAZAR'S FINAL ORDER TO SPANISH TROOPS, JAN 13, BESIDES PRAISING THEM FOR THEIR DISCIPLINE AND CALMNESS "WHEN WAR COULD HAVE BROKEN OUT AT ANY MOMENT", REFERRED TO "DESPERATE SITUATION" RESULTING IN SAHARA FROM F POLISARIO'S SEDITIOUS ACTIVITIES.

3. SPANISH MILITARY DISSATISFACTION WITH OUTCOME. COL. DE VIGURI, WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD TAKEN PUBLIC STANCE OBJECTING TO OMISSION OF SAHARAN PEOPLE'S INTERESTS IN TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT IN NOV 1975, SENT A LETTER TO THE MEDIA JAN 17 PUBLICLY CRITICIZING THE ABSENCE OF GOVT INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF REMAINING SPANIARDS IN SAHARA AND LACK OF MEDIA SUPPORT FOR THEIR MISSION. THIS UNUSUAL AND POSSIBLY INSUBORDINATE ACTION OF THE COLONEL MAY IN FACT INDICATE DEEPER SENSE OF FRUSTRATION AMONG SOME OF THE SPANISH MILITARY WITH THE GOVT'S HANDLING OF THE SAHARAN CRISIS. "ALCAZAR", THE ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF VETERANS, WHICH INCLUDES SOME ACTIVE DUTY OFFICERS, PUBLISHED JAN 14 AN EDITORIAL SIGNED BY "XERXES" (PSEUDONYM FOR A GENERAL) SHARPLY ATTACKING THE GOVT FOR ITS FAILURE TO SAFEGUARD SPANISH HONOR AND DIGNITY IN ITS

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HASTE TO LEAVE THE SAHARA. EMBASSY AND DATT CONTACTS HAVE FREQUENTLY ALLUDED TO DISSATISFACTION ON THE PART OF SOME OF THE ARMY STEMMING FROM WHAT IS CONSIDERED BY SOME OFFICERS AS AN IGNOMINIOUS WITHDRAWAL UNDER AN INTOLERABLE "INVASION" BY A MOROCCAN MOB. AT PRESENT THIS SENTIMENT APPEARS TO BE HELD BY A DECIDED MINORITY, PRINCIPALLY THOSE HARD LINERS WHO HAVE HAD LONG SERVICE IN AFRICA.

4. SPANISH/MOROCCAN RELATIONS. SPANISH MEDIA HAVE PICKED UP AND REPORTED IN PAST FEW DAYS ISTIQLAL LEADER BUFETTA'S REITERATION OF CLAIMS TO SPANISH PRESIDIOS ALONG WITH TINDOUF IN ALGERIA. ALTHOUGH NEWS COMMENTATORS HAVE AVOIDED FOCUSING ON ISSUE, INTERMITTENT ISTIQLAL CLAIMS AND REFERENCES TO ISSUE BY KING HASSAN IN PRESS CONFERENCES GIVE IMPRESSION TO SPANISH READERS THAT THIS ISSUE COULD BE WHIPPED UP INTO NEW "GREEN MARCH" IN MUCH THE SAME MANNER IN WHICH GOM STEPPED UP PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN SAHARA BEGINNING IN JULY 1974.

5. MEANWHILE, INI PRESIDENT ANTONANZAS, WHO VISITED RABAT JAN 19-20 TO NEGOTIATE WITH MOROCCAN PHOSPHATE ENTITY, TOLD PRESS REPS ON HIS RETURN THAT LATTER HAS AGREED TO PURCHASE 65 PCT OF FOS BUCRAA'S STOCK LEAVING INI WITH A 35 PCT INTEREST. ANTONANSAS REVEALED THAT SPAIN HAS AGREED TO DESIGN AND SUPPLY EQUIPMENT FOR A STEEL PLANT FOR MOROCCO BUT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO AGREEMENT ON FISHING RIGHTS IN SAHARAN WATERS. (THIS HAS BEEN A CONSTANT STICKING POINT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS.)

6. WHILE GOVT AND MILITARY LEADERS' STATEMENTS EXPRESS CONFIDENCE THAT MOROCCO WILL NOT PRESS FOR ENCLAVES AND WILL QUICKLY RESOLVE FISHING AND OTHER ISSUES, SOME SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE TOLD DAO THAT THEY DO NOT EXPECT MOROCCO TO LIVE UP TO ANY AGREEMENT FOR VERY LONG. THEY STILL ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS U.S. ROLE IN AIDING MOROCCO MILITARILY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MADRID00499
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760026-0050
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760132/aaaabbry.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <12 AUG 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA DEVELOPMENTS SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH SPAIN WITHDREW ITS LAST MILITARY UNITS FROM
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, EMIN, SS, SP, MO, AL
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006